

May is Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month

Air Particles We Breathe

Many particles of different types and sizes are carried in the air we breathe. Some large particles may settle on the walls and furniture in your home. Other large particles are removed by your nose and mouth when you inhale. Smaller particles are breathed deep into the lungs.

Asthma may be triggered by both the large and small particles. Some air particles come from the indoors and others are carried in the outdoor air. Outdoor particles come into your home through windows, doors, and heating systems.

For most people, the indoor air particles cause no problems. But people with allergic symptoms, including asthma, can have problems right in their own home.

Asthma and Allergy "Triggers"

If you have allergic symptoms or asthma, you are sensitive to "triggers," including particles carried in the air. These "triggers" can set off a reaction in your lungs and other parts of your body. Triggers can be found indoors or outdoors. They can be simple things like:

- ♦ Cold air
- ♦ Tobacco smoke and wood smoke
- ♦ Perfume, paint, hair spray, or any strong odors or fumes
- ♦ Allergens (particles that cause allergies) such as dust mites, pollen, molds, pollution, and animal dander (which are tiny scales or particles that fall off hair, feathers or skin) from any pets
- ♦ Common cold, influenza, and other respiratory illnesses

It's important to learn what your triggers are. Since finding your triggers isn't always easy, ask your doctor for help. Your doctor may suggest keeping an asthma diary, skin testing to test for allergies and/or a special diet to look for food allergies. If you do know your triggers, cutting down exposure to them may help avoid asthma and allergy attacks.

If you don't know your triggers, try to limit your exposure to one suspected trigger at a time. Watch to see if you get better. This may show you if the trigger was a problem for you.

General Rules to Help Control the Home Environment

Controlling the home environment is a very important part of asthma and allergy care.

Some general rules for home control for all members of the family are:

- ♦ Reduce or remove as many asthma and allergy triggers from your home as possible.
- ♦ If possible, use air filters and air conditioners to make your home cleaner and more comfortable.
- ♦ Pay attention to the problem of dust mites. Work hard to control this problem in the bedroom.
- ♦ Vacuum cleaners stir up dust and allergens in the air. A vacuum cleaner with an air filter or a central vacuum cleaner with a collection bag outside the home may be of limited value. Anyone with asthma or allergies should avoid vacuuming. If vacuuming must be done, a dust mask may help.

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National Suicide Awareness Week

Be Aware of the Warning Signs

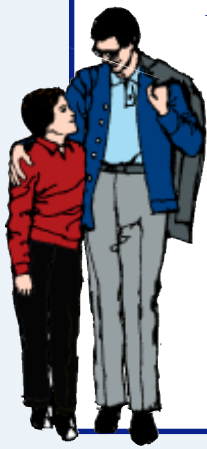
There is no typical suicide victim. It happens to young and old, rich and poor. Fortunately, there are some common warning signs which, when acted upon, can save lives.

A person might be suicidal if he or she:

- Talks about committing suicide
- Has trouble eating or sleeping
- Experiences drastic changes in behavior
- Withdraws from friends and/or social activities
- Loses interest in hobbies, work, school, etc.
- Gives away prized possessions
- Has attempted suicide before
- Takes unnecessary risks
- Has experienced recent severe losses
- Is preoccupied with death and dying
- Loses interest in personal appearance
- Increases use of alcohol or drugs



What to Do



Here are some ways to be helpful to someone who is threatening suicide:

- ♦ Be direct. Talk openly and matter-of-factly about suicide.
- ♦ Be willing to listen. Allow expressions of feelings. Accept the feelings.
- ♦ Be non-judgmental. Don't debate whether suicide is right or wrong, or feelings are good or bad. Don't lecture on the value of life.
- ♦ Don't act shocked. This will put distance between you.
- ♦ Don't be sworn to secrecy. Seek support.
- ♦ Offer hope that alternatives are available but do not offer glib reassurance.
- ♦ Take action. Remove means, such as guns or stockpiled pills.
- ♦ Get help from persons or agencies specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention.

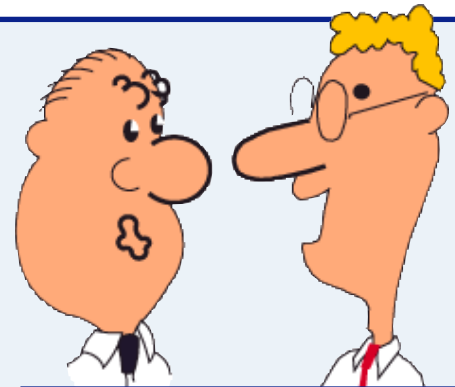
Be Aware of Feelings

Many people at some time in their lives think about committing suicide. Most decide to live because they eventually come to realize that the crisis is temporary and death is permanent. On the other hand, people having a crisis sometimes perceive their dilemma as inescapable and feel an utter loss of control. These are some of the feelings and things they experience:

- Can't stop the pain
- Can't think clearly
- Can't make decisions
- Can't see any way out
- Can't sleep, eat or work
- Can't get out of depression
- Can't make the sadness go away
- Can't see a future without pain
- Can't get someone's attention
- Can't seem to get control
- Can't see themselves as worthwhile

If you experience these feelings, get help!

If someone you know exhibits these symptoms, offer help!



Contact:

- A community mental health agency
- A school counselor or psychologist
- A private therapist or counselor
- A family physician
- A suicide prevention or crisis center

Sourced from American Association of Suicidology